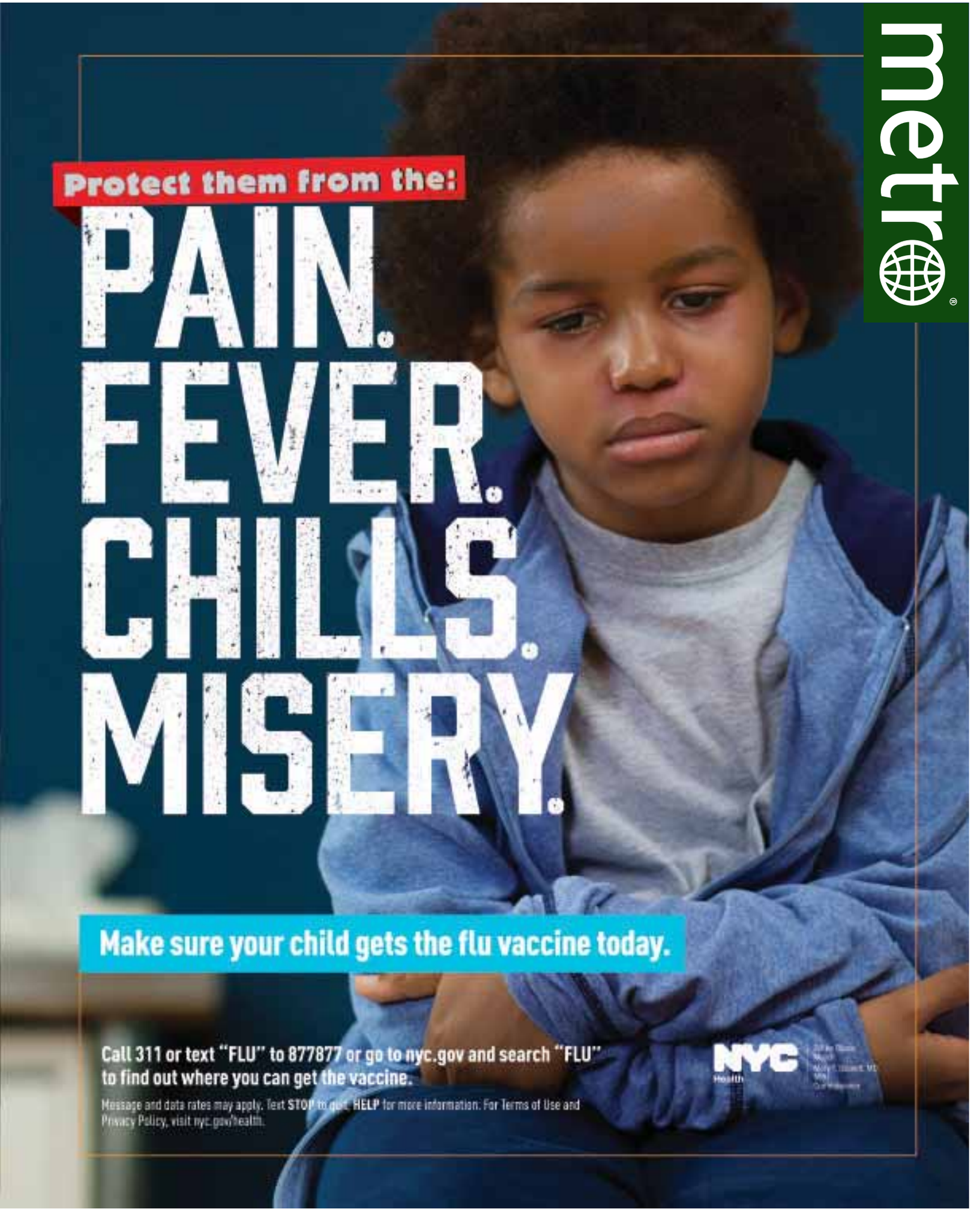
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Everett Bradley takes Christmas back to the funky '70s with 'Holidelic.' 17

GIANTS ARE GIANT-KILLERS

The G-Men are equipped to KO the Panthers on Sunday. 18

Mayor de Blasio unveils new plan to combat homelessness. 6

The Dark Side is back in "The Force Awakens," which won't let you down. 14-16

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US RESPONSE TO LAUNCH

1 The Obama administration is considering how to respond to an Iranian ballistic missile launch that violated U.N. Security Council resolutions, officials said, as senators pressed for a strong reaction. "We are now actively considering the appropriate consequences to that launch in October," said Stephen Mull, the State Department's lead coordinator for implementing an international nuclear deal with Iran. REUTERS

US, CUBA RESUME FLIGHTS

2 The United States and Cuba have agreed to restore scheduled commercial airline service between the two countries for the first time in more than five decades, exactly a year after they started the process of normalizing relations. The latest step to restore U.S.-Cuba ties after 54 years of hostility will not go into effect immediately but should eventually increase tourism and business on the Communist-ruled island. Once implemented, the agreement will allow U.S. airlines to sell tickets on their websites for flights to Cuba. REUTERS

FCC WANTS PLAN DETAILS

3 The Federal Communications Commission said it has asked Internet providers to discuss innovative data policies in the wake of the government's net-neutrality rules. FCC staff sent letters to AT&T, Comcast and T-Mobile "to come in and have a discussion with us about some of the innovative things that they are doing." REUTERS

7 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

SHKRELI ARRESTED

7 Martin Shkreli, who triggered public outrage after raising the price of a prescription drug by more than 5,000 percent, was arrested Thursday for engaging in what U.S. prosecutors said was a Ponzi-like scheme at his former hedge fund and a pharmaceutical company he previously headed. REUTERS.

ALL PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

'STAR WARS' ADS

4 What appears to be a new ad campaign for the newest "Star Wars" film has begun popping up all over New York City in the form of hilariously sardonic posters. "The L train leads to Williamsburg. Williamsburg leads to hipsters. Hipsters lead to rage. Rage leads to hate. Hate leads to the Dark Side," reads one of the posters. MATT LEE

MONUMENTS REMOVED

5 New Orleans city leaders voted Thursday to remove several high-profile monuments honoring leaders of the Confederacy, joining a national movement in response to the shooting deaths of nine black churchgoers in South Carolina in June. The city has been debating since this summer a call by Mayor Mitch Landrieu to remove the monuments amid a broad push to take out of public display the Confederate battle flag and other symbols used by the pro-slavery South during the Civil War. REUTERS

RAPPER ARRESTED

6 Rapper Azealia Banks was arrested Wednesday outside a Meatpacking District club after she allegedly punched a security guard and bit her breast. Banks, 24, was kicked out of the Up&Down club shortly after midnight for a fight, the New York Post reported. JASON NUCKOLLS

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Security stepped up for 'Star Wars'

Double-check theaters' policies before you bring your toy blaster.

SPENCER BUELL
@MetroBOS
spencer.buell@metro.us

Movie theaters and cities around the country were beefing up security as they prepped for the release of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" this week.

Anticipating large crowds, police in Boston promised to have extra patrols on the street and said the department had been in touch with area cinemas to talk security.

"We have asked that they step up their security manpower and increase visibility both inside and outside of the theaters. Many theaters are recommending that patrons leave any large backpacks at home," BPD spokesman Stephen McNulty told Metro.

In Philadelphia, a manager at the Cinemark University City Penn 6 theater, Troy Pugh, told Metro there would be a strict no-toy-weapon policy. The theater bans both toy guns and lightsabers, he said.

Pugh also said there would be two guards and a police officer on duty at the cinema, and said more guards would be on call in case the crowd is larger than expected.

"We've been preparing for this movie for a couple of months," Pugh said. "We're definitely prepared, so everything should be fine."

Police in New York did not immediately respond to questions on security arrangements for the film's release.

Hoping to warn any toy-gun-toting fans, AMC theaters, the national cinema chain, released a list of rules for excited moviegoers looking to dress up.

"AMC does not permit weapons or items that would make other guests feel uncomfortable or detract from the movie-going experience," the advisory reads. "Guests are welcome to come dressed in costume, but we do not permit masks or face paint. Ion short, bring your lightsaber, turn it off during the movie a, and leave the blaster and Darth Vader mask at home."

One of the many super-fans wearing movie-themed get-ups to theaters was Barbara So of Gloucester, Mass., who had been at the AMC Boston Common since midnight for a day-long "Star Wars" marathon.

> *"We've been preparing for this movie for a couple of months."*
>
> Pugh

She and her fiance, Cameron Lowe, who brought green and blue lightsabers, did their homework and read through the outfit policy before donning costumes, she said.

"We wanted to make sure there wasn't anything that was going to prevent us from getting access," she said.

National Amusements, another cinema chain, is also upping its security presence, spokeswoman Rachel Lulay told Metro.

"With increased crowds we increase security, as will be the case with 'Star Wars,'" Lulay said in an email.

The chain also has a policy on movie fan attire that bans face-coverings and fake weapons.

"Guests are welcome to dress in costume with movie related accessories, however we reserve the right to respectfully inspect all items that our guests may decide to bring with them," Lulay wrote.

Many theater managers declined to comment to Metro about safety precautions, deferring to their national corporate headquarters.

Barbara So and her fiance, Cameron Lowe, dress as their favorite characters for a "Star Wars" movie marathon. NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/

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A homeless man sleeps in the park. GETTY IMAGES

‘Aggressive’ plan to combat homelessness in the city

The mayor unveiled HOME-STAT days after the commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services resigned.

TRACY LEE
@MetroNewYork
letters@metro.us

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Thursday sweeping changes in the city’s homeless outreach program amid a burgeoning homelessness crisis, offering an “aggressive” program aimed at getting every single homeless person off the streets.

Unveiling the new initiative known as HOME-STAT, or NYC Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Team, de Blasio highlighted the first-ever deployment of a daily canvass onto every block from Canal Street to 145th Street.

“We will be able to tell at any point in time exactly how many homeless New Yorkers are living on the street,” de Blasio said at a breakfast meeting of the Association for a Better New York.

This comes in a series of overhauls — the departure of his commissioner of Homeless Services two days ago, a 90-day review of the organizational structure of the Department of Homeless Services and last month’s massive $2.6 billion housing investment — de Blasio has made in tackling one of his biggest challenges as mayor.

Last year, an all-time high of 59,068 New Yorkers were living without stable shelter, reported the New York Daily News.

Focusing on hot spots, HOME-STAT — which is being implemented immediately — is “going to be the eyes and ears of our city” where now resources, individuals and places will be identified much faster.

“I’m glad to see him taking more aggressive action, the problem is growing … it’s been too docile of a response,” said Craig Mayes, CEO of NYC Rescue Mission and chairman of the association of Gospel Rescue Missions. “I think it’s a positive thing, I’m very supportive,”

While Rescue Mission, the country’s oldest shelter, sees its full capacity at 220-225 people in the winter, Mayes said it is the street homeless who are the most difficult group to help.

“If someone can engage them, show them some love … it’s kind of a search and rescue, you go out and find them,” Mayes said.

If people can approach them in a “professional and kind way,” then it can make all the difference, Mayes said.

A suite of HOME-STAT “dashboards” will be created, including a daily public dashboard that maps service requests and data from HOME-STAT survey and outreach teams, as well as with the police department. A monthly dashboard will then report performance, beginning in early 2016.

Other highlights of the program include a response time within one hour from a stronger outreach team of concerns of New Yorkers on the streets, as well as a centralized operation for working with homeless on the street.

“We will assign each street homeless individual a dedicated caseworker who will make it their mission to get their clients off the street and into a healthier place, permanently,” de Blasio said.

“We believe Mayor de Blasio’s analysis and restructuring plan will, at long last, bring thousands of homeless New Yorkers in off the streets and into permanent housing,” said Mary Brosnahan, president and CEO of Coalition for the Homeless.

“We will be able to tell at any point in time exactly how many homeless New Yorkers are living on the street.”
de Blasio

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY COPS IS OFTEN IGNORED

ERNEST OWENS

The Ernest Opinion

Award-winning multimedia journalist Ernest Owens is a keen observer of social, LGBT and race issues in Philadelphia. Follow him @MrErnestOwens

The numbers are staggering: 40 hours of deliberation; 18 guilty verdicts; 263 years in prison.

Those are the numbers out of an Oklahoma courtroom for ex-police officer Daniel Holtzclaw, holding him responsible for numerous incidents of first-degree rape and forcible oral sodomy of multiple female civilians, mostly women of color.

The numbers — and press coverage — are anomalous.

Unlike the seeming ubiquitous coverage of a seeming endless string of police killings of young black men, we don't hear much about the substantial number of women who have been sexually assaulted by cops.

A recent report by the Cato Institute found that after brutality (choking, beating, shooting) complaints, sexual misconduct was the most reported allegation of officer misconduct.

But just as our society sails to seriously addressing rape culture in general, it's no wonder that we haven't paid proper attention to sexual transgressions by cops who are supposed to protect and serve us all.

"Vulnerability, desperation, interrogation and stigma pervade spaces where Lady Justice should be wearing a blindfold to race, gender and class."

The main reason such incidents don't set off media alarm bells — in comparison with other injustices — is based on the particular subpopulation most vulnerable to police sexual violence: black women.

According to the Women's Prison Association, black women are incarcerated at 3.75 times the rate of white women, thus having more interaction with police, and overall, have a higher chance of being raped.

Cops like Holtzclaw take advantage of the socioeconomic disadvantages of women of color — who also lack the proper legal support and capital required in properly holding the officers accountable.

It took a 36-count indictment and numerous victims speaking out and all those other numbers in order to secure a lengthy prison sentence for Holtzclaw.

However, despite Holtzclaw being found guilty on all charges pertaining to six of the black women who testified against him and some charges affecting two of them – the jury found him not guilty of 18 charges of crimes against five other women. Those women received no personal justice.

This is what our criminal justice system looks like for those who are victims of police sexual violence. Vulnerability, desperation, interrogation and stigma pervade spaces where Lady Justice should be wearing a blindfold to race, gender and class.

Instead we are given a reminder that such justice is only given grudgingly, if at all, to women.

And the often-ignored sexual abuse that continues to cripple our trust and faith in law-enforcement.

As much as my life as a young black man is beginning to matter to the media, I'm hoping that the experiences of diverse sexual assault victims matter as well.

A pair of police officers monitors a busy road. FILE PHOTO

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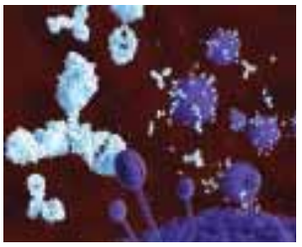

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Please donate to the Metro Magic annual holiday toy drive during the 2015 holiday season.

In keeping with the holiday spirit of giving, Metro is once again launching Tony's Metro Magic, our annual toy drive for underprivileged children in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

This year marks the seventh anniversary of the toy drive, which was renamed in memory of the man who oversaw the project for more than four years, Tony Metcalf, Metro's longest-running editor-in-chief. Metcalf passed away in 2013 from colon cancer at the age of 50.

Metcalf lit up every year as he saw the faces of children unwrap their holiday gifts. It is our goal to keep that magic alive. We are now asking readers to contribute what they can to Tony's Metro Magic.

Metro has created a wish list at the Target website that readers can access by going to www.metro.us and clicking on the Tony's Metro Magic logo.

From there, just choose the toys you wish to donate, pay online using Target's secure payment system. Your gifts, along with your name attached, will be delivered to Metro's offices in each city.

This season we hope you will remember the children who will spend the holidays in shelters or who may not have gifts to open. Even one small gift can make a big difference in a child's holiday season.

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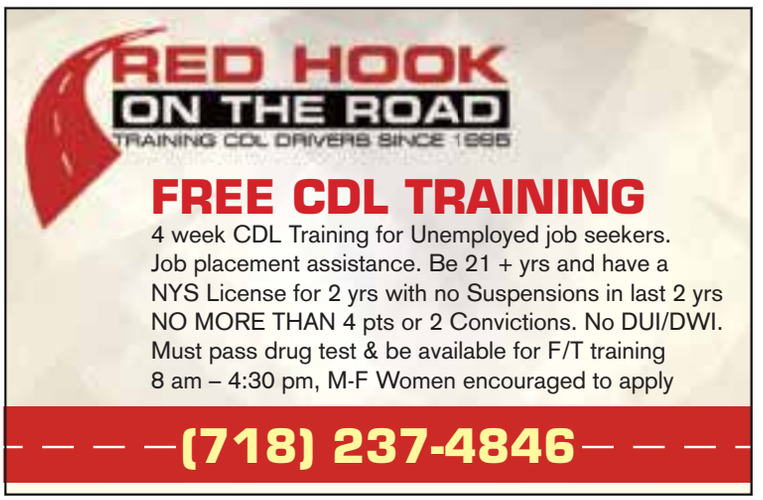
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Neighbor who bought guns for California shooters arrested

A law enforcement source said Enrique Marquez, who converted to Islam, and Farook apparently plotted an attack around 2012 but abandoned the idea.

Weapons confiscated from the attacks. SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT

A former neighbor suspected of supplying guns to the married couple who massacred 14 people in San Bernardino, California, has been arrested, the Los Angeles Times reported on Thursday, citing federal authorities.

Enrique Marquez, a friend and former neighbor of Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, who carried out the Islamic State-inspired Dec. 2 attack with his wife, Tashfeen Malik, 29, will be charged with conspiring to provide material support to 'terrorists'.

Marquez, 24, who had checked himself into a Los Angeles-area psychiatric facility shortly after the shootings, had several connections to Farook and Malik and quickly became a key figure in the investigation of the shootings. The FBI, which is treating the attack as terrorism, raided his home and questioned him for several days. Sources said Marquez cooperated during their interviews.

Marquez, who had known Farook since they were teenage neighbors in the city of Riverside, legally purchased the two AR-15 assault-style rifles that the couple used in their attack on a holiday party of Farook's co-workers. Farook, the U.S-born son of Pakistani immigrants, and Pakistani-born Malik were killed in a shootout with police a few hours after their assault on the party. REUTERS

BRIEF

NY couple face long prison terms for abusing Amish sisters

A New York man and his girlfriend were sentenced on Thursday to 580 years and 300 years in federal prison respectively, for drugging and sexually exploiting half a dozen young girls, including two Amish sisters they abducted from a roadside farm stand, according to court records.

Stephen Howells and Nicole Vaisey had pleaded guilty in May to numerous child pornography counts in federal court in Syracuse, admitting they abused six girls ranging in age from 5 to 11.

U.S. District Judge Glenn Suddaby imposed the sentences after prosecutors urged him to deliver stiff penalties for the two.

Howells, a father of three, used his job as a registered nurse to obtain sedatives the couple then gave to the girls, according to authorities.

REUTERS

Katy Perry and Andrea Bocelli: Hedge funds party despite losses

Singer Katy Perry GETTY IMAGES

Hedge fund managers faced a tricky question this holiday season: how to thank employees but not offend disappointed clients.

Despite a year of heavy losses for some in the industry, anecdotal evidence suggests holiday traditions were upheld and, in some cases, embellished, with guest appearances from pop star Katy Perry, acrobatic entertainers and at least one weekend sojourn to Florida as just some of the treats on offer.

Ken Griffin's Citadel marked its 25th anniversary with major parties last month. One, in its hometown of Chicago, was a black tie affair featuring Perry backed by costumed dancers and an elaborate lighting display, according to video clips of the event posted online. Another, in New York, featured band Maroon 5 and violinists suspended by strings. Citadel's main hedge funds have again performed well this year and the firm now manages a record $25 billion.

Other holiday parties, according to people with knowledge of them, included Fortress Investment Group hosting employees at high-end event space Gotham Hall in New York, Tudor Investment Corp. gathering staffers at The Pierre, a Manhattan luxury hotel, and Whitebox Advisors throwing an annual event near its Minneapolis headquarters.

Representatives for Citadel, Viking, Fortress and Tudor declined to comment or did not respond to a request.

SkyBridge Capital, the hedge fund investment firm led by Anthony Scaramucci, held a relatively low-key dinner event for staffers at the Manhattan restaurant he co-owns, Hunt & Fish Club. SkyBridge has been known to throw major parties at its annual "SALT" investment conference in Las Vegas and at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, among others.

The firm's fund of hedge fund portfolios have lost a small amount of money this year, but Scaramucci couldn't resist one flourish at the New York dinner: star singer Andrea Bocelli. The blind tenor, a personal friend of the SkyBridge founder, was in town for a concert at Madison Square Garden and Scaramucci invited him and his wife to the party as guests, according to a familiar with the situation.

Bocelli came and belted out Ave Maria, a traditional Christmas song that references a prayer to the Virgin Mary. REUTERS

Facebook puts a price on suburban living for employees

Offices at Facebook headquarters in Palo Alto, California. GETTY IMAGES

Facebook is offering employees at its Silicon Valley headquarters at least $10,000 to move closer to the office, a reflection of the challenges many tech companies face in the increasingly expensive and congested San Francisco Bay area.

To qualify for the payment, which the social networking firm started offering in the last 12 months, according to current and former Facebook workers, employees must buy or rent a home within 10 miles of the Facebook campus at One Hacker Way, a desolate strip of road overlooking a marsh about 30 miles south of San Francisco.

Some Facebook employees with families to support could earn a one-off payment of $15,000 or more for housing costs.

Facebook's efforts, along with similar programs at some other technology companies including investment management technology company Addepar, data company Palantir and software firm SalesforceIQ, a unit of Salesforce.com Inc, could help ease a major source of tension in San Francisco: an influx of young, wealthy tech workers who commute to Silicon Valley on private buses and often displace lower-income residents.

But Silicon Valley has a housing affordability crisis of its own, and if Facebook's program gains traction it could further accelerate the gentrification of nearby communities, especially the low-income city of East Palo Alto.

"A lot of local families are going to get hurt," said John Liotti, chief executive officer of East Palo Alto community advocacy group Able Works.

Facebook said the program is not about social engineering. "Our benefits at Facebook are designed to support our employees and the people who matter most to them at all stages of life," a Facebook spokesman said.

Cynics suggest the company might be looking to encourage people to spend more time in the office while also cutting the cost of its luxury bus service, whose drivers recently unionized.

REUTERS

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This watch doesn't do dainty. And neither do I. Call me old-fashioned, but I want my boots to be leather, my tires to be deep-tread monsters, and my steak thick and rare. Inspiration for a man's watch should come from things like fast cars, firefighters and power tools. And if you want to talk beauty, then let's discuss a 428 cubic inch V8.

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Adam Driver plays villainous Kylo Ren in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." LUCASFILM

THE FUN STARTS HERE

Oscar Isaac is pro-Jar Jar

The indie actor goes interstellar as a new "Star Wars" hero.

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@Nedrick
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Oscar Isaac has been doing a commendable job of not spilling any spoilers about "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," in which he plays Poe Dameron, one of the new generation of heroes in the storied franchise — and the Resistance's best pilot. Luckily while filming, Harrison Ford was around to give him some pointers on piloting a spaceship — or so Isaac thought.

How difficult or easy has it been for you to keep your mouth shut about what happens in the film?
Pretty easy. It's kind of like when you have a gift for somebody, you don't want to tell them what it is before they open it.

What was your own personal history with the franchise growing up?
The first film I ever watched in the theater was "Return of the Jedi." It made a huge impression on me, and I became a big fan of it. My family are huge fans, so we would dress up and do "Star Wars"-themed parties whenever the new movies would come out and collect the toys. We would dress up as the characters and throw parties and learn the fight scenes.

What would you dress up as?
I'd dress up as a Gonk droid. It's a box. Just a gray box. Very lazy.

As an actor, how do you wrap your mind around joining a franchise like this?
It's hard to wrap your mind around it. In a way, you just try to diminish the whole thing a little bit and try to do the job that you know how to do, which is: How do you create this character? How do you make it interesting for yourself? How do you make him compelling and honest? So it was more about doing that and not thinking so much about the size of it.

OK, so what's your honest opinion of Jar Jar Binks?
Am I happy about Jar Jar Binks or not happy about Jar Jar Binks? Um … uh … I love Jar Jar Binks.

Really? Because, you know, he has his detractors out there.
That's why. I always root for the underdog. Or the under-Gungan.

There's a fan theory now that he's a Sith lord.
I know. I've heard about this. It's a bit of a reach, I think. He's just all good.

And are you excited to work with director Rian Johnson next on "Episode VII"?
I hope I get to.

Oscar Isaac GETTY IMAGES

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The new 'Star Wars': It doesn't suck!

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens"

Director: J.J. Abrams
Stars: Daisy Ridley, John Boyega
Rating: PG-13

● ● ● ● ●

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

Behold, the junky Millennium Falcon is back in action. **LUCASFILM**

The good news comes early: "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" opens with a text crawl setting up a story that actually sounds fun. Back in 1999, "The Phantom Menace" began with the words "the taxation of trade routes." All J.J. Abrams' 30-years-later piece of fan fiction had to do was not start like a C-SPAN transcript.

Abrams goes one, two, maybe three better. The text reveals Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) has vanished, and he's sought by warring factions known as "The First Order" and "The Resistance." We might not immediately realize these are actually the old, evil Empire and the old Rebel Alliance, renamed and repurposed but basically, after all these decades, the same thing.

"The Force Awakens" is basically the same, too. It does what the dreaded prequels refused to do: It gives us what we want. And what we want is more of the same.

The story is essentially a loose repeat of the original "Star Wars." There's another every-person/maybe-savior — this time Daisy Ridley's resilient scavenger, Rey — living on a desert planet. She happens upon another intelhoarding, bleep-bloopy robot: the mega-super-duper-holy-crap-adorable rollerball BB-8.

Nostalgic classics like the Millennium Falcon, beloved characters, another multicultural cantina, that John Williams score, those screen wipes — all get dusted off and soldiered out for our delectation. Everything old is basically what it was before, only either aged or with different faces.

But it's not exactly the same, just as "Creed" wasn't exactly a carbon copy of "Rocky." These two new films are brethren, and if they succeed at anything it's that sequels, even tardy ones, are superior to prequels and those dreaded origin stories that clog the multiplexes. Abrams' "Star Wars" tries to strike a balance between hitting all the usual beats and reworking them so they feel at least mostly fresh.

We can't, more or less legally, at this time spill much more on the plot, and especially a few of its fairly shocking turns, at least one of which was probably inevitable (but still shocks). But we can say its first hour is especially on point, with a plot that moves and twists like mad. It's as though Abrams and team saw how leaden and heavyfooted the prequels were and tried to do the opposite.

Gone is the overly digital, stiff look of the George Lucas-directed prequels. This one, directed by a fanboy for fanboys, was shot on film, with shots that are expressive, poetic, magisterial — all the things the prequels weren't.

It was the humanity, not the whooshing of lightsabers and goofy aliens, that made "Star Wars" great. "The Force Awakens" gets that more than it gets anything, which is why everything from a gizmo made of two spinning balls to Harrison Ford — an actor not always happy to be on screen, and definitely not always happy to be forever Han Solo — teems with life.

Tina Fey and Amy Poehler hold an old-school throwdown for people too old to party that hard in "Sisters." **K. C. BAILEY, UNIVERSAL PICTURES**

"Sisters"

Director: Jason Moore
Stars: Amy Poehler, Tina Fey
Rating: R

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Seth Rogen has cornered the market on movies about manchildren anguishing over getting old, usually with the help of copious drink and drugs and raunchy set pieces. "Sisters" doesn't make a big deal about doing the same thing for women. Female twists on the Rogen/Apatow formula, like "Bridesmaids," tend to balance their comedic and serious sides. The second Amy Poehler-Tina Fey joint has its dark side, but it mostly drowns its sorrows in full-tilt boogie hedonism. It's a crazier, filthier, swearier film than the Rogen-led "The Night Before," and it even knows how to make the fun hurt more.

Poehler and Fey play Maura and Kate, opposites-attract siblings who discover their parents (Dianne Wiest and James Brolin) have just sold their precious childhood home to some douchey yuppies. Maura was too busy being good to enjoy her youth; Kate, meanwhile, is despondent that she's no longer young, though still dumb. At first, the wild party they hatch for their high school pals is the kind that happens when early-middle-agers congregate. It takes some doing to get these olds to destroy both their bodies and a swanky Florida manse.

Once things kick up 10 or 12 notches, "Sisters" never looks back. "Let's party like Vikings, because we may die tomorrow," Kate declaims as she declares the party turn awesome. The Rogen Men Behaving Badly films always brood over looming maturity killing the good times, but there's always another party, always another raucous movie. "Sisters" feels End Times. Come morning, they'll have to return to their problems, be they financial pickles, go-nowhere jobs or simply the dull monotony of the life they've created.

But ignore that for now. "Sisters" gets wild, with mass destruction and John Cena as a dealer named "Pazuzu," stealing every scene without moving an inch. It's better than the last Poehler-Fey movie outing, "Baby Mama," which was fathoms beneath them. "Sisters" is more their speed, and when it's just an out-of-control party stacked with people a few years from worrying about arthritis, it's kind of magical. **MP**

Geza Rohrig plays a member of the Sonderkommando, the unit of concentration camp inmates who aided in the disposal of fellow Jews, in "Son of Saul." SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

"Son of Saul"

Director: Laszlo Nemes
Stars: Geza Rohrig, Levente Molnar
Rating: R

● ● ● ● ●

The first thing you notice in "Son of Saul" is the technique. Then you notice the horror. It shouldn't be that way, not when the subject is the Holocaust and the setting is Auschwitz-Birkenau. "Saul" is Hungarian filmmaker Laszlo Nemes' first feature, and it's almost a fact that it's brilliantly made.

Whether it's brilliantly felt is another matter. Despite its obvious noble intentions, "Son of Saul" is narratively boilerplate, with a story cobbled together from other Holocaust tales we've seen time and time again. Our guide is Saul (Geza Rohrig), a haunted member of the Sonderkommando, the concentration camp units made up of inmates forced, under threat of death, to aid in the disposal of their brethren. His only distraction is a mission: He's found a dead boy who may be his son, and he seeks to give him a proper, religious funeral.

It's not too cynical to think Nemes calculated what would make a great film, then did just that. It's too clean, which is to say it's often too contrived, cramming every incident that could happen in a story like this: the shower execution, the mass fire, the attempted escape, the "Children of Men"-style long take through chaos. It's like a connect-the-dots austere art film. And yet it still devastates. After all, how could it not? **MATT PRIGGE**

The stars of 'Star Wars' speak

Director J.J. Abrams and the cast take you inside the making of "The Force Awakens." **NED EHRBAR**

J.J. ABRAMS (DIRECTOR)

Coming on board:
"This is a project that I felt incredibly lucky to be asked to be a part of. I think I speak for all of us, except for maybe Harrison, when I say this was not a job," he says before laughing. "I'm kidding, Harrison was unbelievable. But the process of this movie — to a person on the crew, to a person on the cast — this was not a job. This was nothing that I think any one of us took on because it was a gig that was available. It was something that felt like a true passion."

J.J. Abrams GETTY IMAGES

The guiding principle:
"At the very beginning, it was about knowing why we were telling this story, and it was to give people that sense of possibility and magic that we all felt when we first saw the original 'Star Wars' movies," he explains. "It's not a nostalgia trip. We had to go backwards in order to go forwards."

His worst day at work:
"The scariest day for me was when Harrison Ford was injured, which is just absolutely hideous," Abrams remembers. "But every day felt like there were challenges, because I knew how important this was to so many people. That was never a presence that went away."

HARRISON FORD (HAN SOLO)

Harrison Ford chills as Han Solo. LUCASFILM

Coming back:
"It's always nice to anticipate working on something that you know people will have an appetite for. This is not a crap shoot. This is a big casino, and it's fun to play with these toys again," Ford says of returning to the franchise. "It seemed easy to come back to the character. Clothes make the man. I've walked more than a mile in those boots. I was interested in the described path of the character. I thought there was an interesting bit of business for the character to do."

Helping the kids:
"I'm not going to tell them how to navigate this very personal space of trying to figure out the careers that they've chosen for themselves," Ford says of John Boyega, Daisy Ridley and Oscar Isaac. "It's bizarrely individual how you navigate the space between where they're at now and the rest of your useful professional life. But they're in for a big ride, and they know it, I think. I hope they know it."

Tough crowd at home:
"My kids do not think I'm cool at all," Ford says with a laugh. "Being in this movie is not going to convince them otherwise. They're just glad to see that Dad is still working."

CARRIE FISHER (GENERAL LEIA ORGANA)

Carrie Fisher is back as Princess-turned-General Leia. LUCASFILM

Biggest fears going into the new movie:
"Not remembering my lines. That was scary," the outspoken Fisher says. "I'm the custodian of Princess Leia, so I never got out of character, and I wondered if that would be noticed. No, I was very nervous. It's been 40 years. It's been a long time. I don't like looking at myself at this age in a large way, so that was scary, and remains so."

Fastest to set:
"How long did it take to get into costume? About 10 minutes. I'm older, I do it faster," she says with a laugh. "No, really, 20 minutes."

JOHN BOYEGA (FINN)

Ignoring the haters:
"I've got to be honest, I really don't care about the black Stormtrooper stuff. I couldn't care less," Boyega says of the online uproar over his character reveal. "This is a movie about human beings, about Wookiees, spaceships and TIE fighters, and it has an undertone and a message of courage, and a message of friendship and loyalty, and I think that is something that is ultimately important."

John Boyega and Oscar Isaac try to fight the evil First Order in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." LUCASFILM

Mysterious origins:
"I didn't know much going in, because of the spoilers and all that kind of stuff, but I do remember during my time screen-testing, I was like to Daisy, 'There's no way that our stories are so simple,'" Boyega says. "And we still don't know."

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Papadelic shakes up the Christmas music rut

Everett Bradley of the E Street Band and "Stomp" brings the funk for the holidays.

CHRIS JORDAN
@MetroNewYork
letters@metro.us

Everett Bradley is on tour with his unique take on the holidays. PROVIDED

What would happen if George Clinton came down the chimney instead of Santa Claus?

Check out Everett Bradley's funky take on the holidays, "Holidelic," Sunday at Highline Ballroom to find out.

It's hard to miss Bradley onstage. He's the guy with the white afro with Christmas lights in it. "It's definitely the period of the late '60s, early '70s, and if you were a black man, you had an afro growing up," says Bradley, aka Papadelic. "When you put one on, it instantly transports you back to the era, to that '70s funk and soul music. Add in the idea of Christmas and the holidays, and you make the afro white like snow."

Bradley's "Holidelic" is a new take on Christmas, one that deals with family dysfunction, shopaholics, overeating and details of the holiday that need to be fixed, all set to an original score.

"My father always played Nat King Cole's ['The Christmas Album'] and I still have that on vinyl and I still play it every year to get me into the spirit," Bradley says. "I listen to the Gap Band, Parliament Funkadelic and Sly Stone, so I took that combination and it got a little deeper when my parents passed away. My mother died in 20003 at Christmas and my father died in 2005 at Christmas, so it's just odd."

One might recognize Bradley without his white afro wig. The South Carolina native's been the percussionist for Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, the musical director for "The Meredith Vieira Show" and played on Broadway as the musical director for "Stomp," part of the creative team of "Swing!" and in the Cotton Club musical revue, "After Midnight."

No, Bradley will not be part of the stripped down E Street Band that comes to Madison Square Garden next month.

"I know what it's like to work on a project and decide that I need to do this myself," says Bradley of Springsteen's decision to drop the choir and horns from the E Street Band. "I wasn't really surprised at not being included. I am open now, just concentrating on Holidelic and after that, it's the first time in a long time I have a little bit of freedom."

If you go:

Everett Bradley's Holidelic
Sunday, 8 p.m.
Highline Ballroom
431 W. 16th St.
$20-$55, 212-414-5994
Highlineballroom.com

Can you guess who the most Shazamed artist of 2015 is?

ISTOCK

Shazam, the app that identifies songs you don't know the name or artist of, just announced who its most searched for artist of the year is — and the honor goes to Diplo, who was Shazamed over 40 million times.

The DJ's response to the reveal was a little baffling. He posted the following to Facebook shortly after the news broke: "I guess that means no one knows my music or who the f I am since u had to Shazam me 40 million times .. U could have just followed me on soundcloud it would save you some time. also pic of me in 2008 when I was popping in shiny suits .. But no seriously thanks."

Diplo isn't the only electronica artist dominating Shazam. David Guetta is the No. 2 most Shazamed artist — not of 2015 but of all time. And the most Shazamed song ever is Avicii's "Wake Me Up." EMILY LAWRENCE

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3 Things to watch for as Giants take on the Panthers

New York again has an opportunity to knock off an unbeaten team.

TONY WILLIAMS
@TBone8
sports@metro.us

The Carolina Panthers (13-0) may be undefeated, but there may be no team more perfectly equipped to handle a league titan than the Giants. Despite losing to the then-unbeaten Patriots in Week 10, the Giants (6-7) showed their mettle by having a stranglehold on New England until the waning seconds. It was certainly good practice, as Big Blue once again battles a perfect team.

It's almost becoming old hat for a Tom Coughlin-led team to have a chance of unseating the unbeaten. This may be their biggest test yet this season, though, as Carolina is arguably the most balanced team in the league. Led by a legitimate MVP candidate in quarterback Cam Newton, and an elite defense, the Panthers have embraced the undefeated challenge instead of running away from it for fear of jinxing it. They're a confident lot, and it all starts with their passionate and feisty head coach Ron Rivera.

A former NFL linebacker for the Bears in the 1980s, Rivera knows a thing or two about playing under pressure for a team with perfect aspirations. He was on the famed 1985 Bears squad that started the season 12-0, en route to a 15-1 mark that carried them to a Super Bowl victory that season.

He's embraced the challenge of trying to do it now as a coach, and his team has followed suit.

1

Battle of the divas

Usually meant as a derogatory term, this is actually a compliment for two guys who know how to get a reaction, attention and accolades. The battle between Beckham and Panthers' cornerback Josh Norman will be must-see television, as they are arguably the best at what they do, and have no problem telling the world so. Both have been accused of being too mouthy for opponents' taste, but when they can back it up so well — and make it look easy — it'd be difficult for anyone to show true modesty. Beckham, according to Rivera, is on the fast track to stardom – and a certain mustard-yellow colored jacket.

"Watching what he's done in his first two seasons is tremendous," Rivera said, adding a comparison that might seem blasphemous to many. "He and Jerry Rice. I've had the great fortune of watching Jerry Rice, and, man, I see a lot of flashes."

The Panthers are more than just Cam Newton. GETTY IMAGES

2

Can Big Blue's even offense crack Carolina's code on defense?

Carolina can beat a team in all three phases, but its calling card is a ferocious and opportunistic defense. Carolina is in the top nine of every meaningful statistical category. They're fourth in points allowed (18.7); third in sacks (40) and yards allowed per game (307.8); tops in interceptions (21), takeaways (33), and turnover differential (plus-18); fifth in passing yards allowed per game (223.2); and second in yards allowed per play (4.7) and rushing yards allowed per game (84.6). Those are some daunting numbers, considering the Giants own the fourth-worst rushing yards per game totals.

3

Giant-killing Giants

No one who's donning the blue and white on Sunday will go into this game in awe. "You have a team that's undefeated, there's some excitement, and, the thought of, 'Hey, can they finish the season undefeated?'" Eli Manning said. "Can they be the team to go to the Super Bowl, be undefeated? There's all that. But for us, we've got a game plan to learn, [and] we've got a scheme to learn from their part. For us, this game is important because it affects our season. We're playing for a playoff spot and we're not really concerned with their situation. It's more our situation that's driving us."

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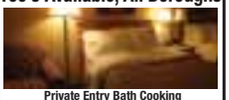

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LEGAL NOTICES

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF QUEENS

Index No. 155/2015
Date Summons Filed: 1-07-15

GLADYS E HUAMAN
Plaintiff

Plaintiff designates Queens County as the place of trial. The basis of venue is CPLR Sec.509.

against-

SUMMONS WITH NOTICE
Plaintiff resides at 35-34 84th Street D-7, Jackson Heights, NY 11372

DAVID BENGOA ESPINOZA
Defendant,

ACTION FOR DIVORCE

To the above named Defendant:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to serve a notice of appearance on the Plaintiff's attorney within twenty (20) days after the service of this summons, exclusive of the day of service (or within thirty (30) days after the service is complete if this summons is not personally delivered to you within the state of New York) and in case of your failure to appear, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the notice set forth below.

Dated: January 7, 2015

Maria Temilda Gonzalez, Esq.,
Attorney for Plaintiff,
76-01 Roosevelt Avenue, 2nd FL,
Jackson heights, NY 11372

NOTICE: The nature of this action is to dissolve the marriage between the parties, on the grounds: DRL Section 170 subd. (7)- The relationship between the Plaintiff and Defendant has broken down irretrievably for a period of at least six months.

The relief sought is a judgment of absolute divorce in favor of the Plaintiff dissolving the marriage between the parties in this action. The nature of any ancillary or additional relief demanded is:

That the Family Court shall have concurrent jurisdiction with the Supreme Court with respect to any future issues of maintenance and support.

That either party may resume the use of a prior surname.

That the Court grant such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and Proper.

The parties have divided the marital property, and no claim will be made by either party under equitable distribution.

Notice of Automatic orders pursuant to DRL Sec. 236 (8) (2) and Notice Concerning Continuation of Health Care Coverage 0020 pursuant to DRL Sec. 255(1) accompany this summons.

(Form UD-1-1/10/10)

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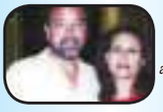

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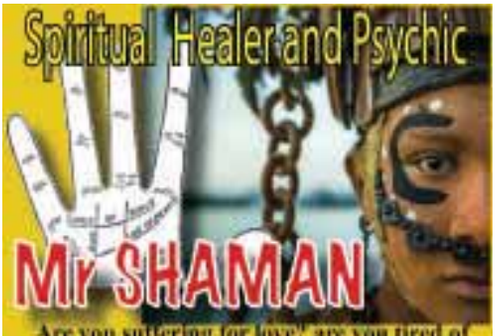

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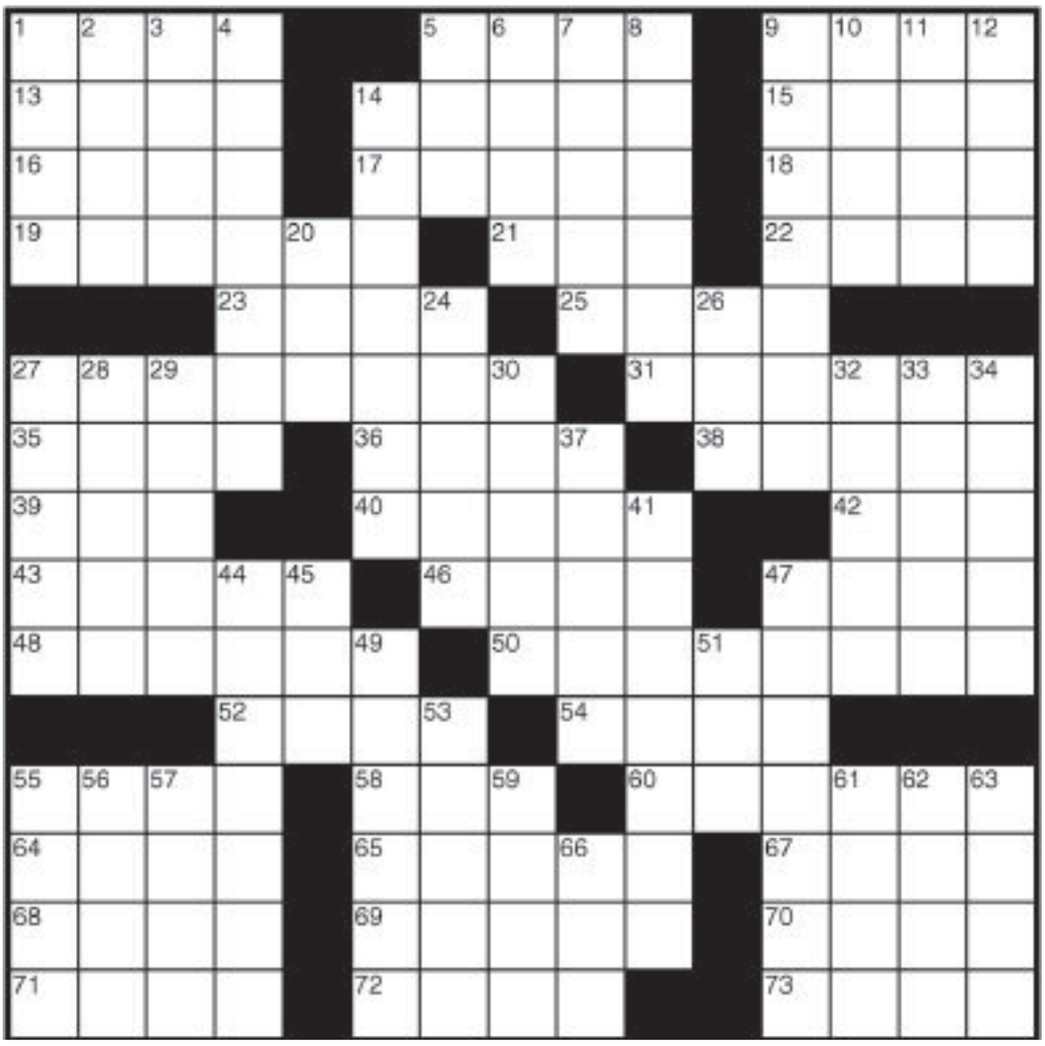
14 Hardships
20 — Wiedersehen
24 Reconnoiter
26 Beaver project
27 Andes ruminant
28 Movie with a posse
29 Musicians Carly or Paul —
30 — salts
32 Ashram dweller
33 Straighter
34 Know somehow
37 Reef
41 Shades of blue
44 Tottered
45 35mm camera
47 Cut off
49 Eerie feeling (2 wds.)
51 "Down Under" bird
53 Females
55 Corn, to chickens
56 Godiva's title
57 Natural impulse
59 Braxton or Tennille
61 Filmmaker — Bunuel
62 Sea eagles
63 Evening out
66 Mow

FOR THE ANSWERS TO TODAY'S PUZZLES, **metro.us/games**



games

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries It's important to stay focused if you want to get everything on your to-do list finished. Bring about change.

Taurus Put more into your relationships with others. Your undivided attention will be appreciated and rewarded.

Gemini Take a step back and be a friendly observer. Try to understand what others are going through and find ways to compensate.

Cancer Let your creative energy flow. Decorate your home for festivities or check out a course that will encourage you to learn new skills.

Leo Bring about change instead of waiting for it to come to you. A chance to travel or network will give you a better understanding.

Virgo Growing uncertainty about your direction and the people around you will be an issue. Reflect about what's happened in the past.

Libra Put a little muscle behind your ideas and plans. You will be able to make positive changes at home that will improve your relationships.

Scorpio Persistence coupled with relentless courage and desire will help you put your creative imagination to work.

Sagittarius Don't let the decisions of others get you down. Concentrate on your own objectives and don't stop until you achieve them.

Capricorn You'll be able to persuade others to see things your way. Taking a unique approach to handling people will improve your reputation.

Aquarius Don't feel pressured to help someone who takes advantage of you. Question the sincerity of those who take but don't give back.

Pisces You'll have plenty of creative ideas, and your imagination will help you find solutions to any problems that come your way. EUGENIA LAST

metro.us/sudoku

easy

2			7				9	6
		5		6			2	
6						7	4	
3		8		2		4		
			5		4			
		4		8		3		7
	1	3						8
	7			9		5		
4	5				1			2

hard

	9		1		6	5	2	
	6		7			8		1
					5	6		
	1		9	2				6
6				3	1		5	
		4	5					
3		6			2		1	
	2	9	3		8		4	

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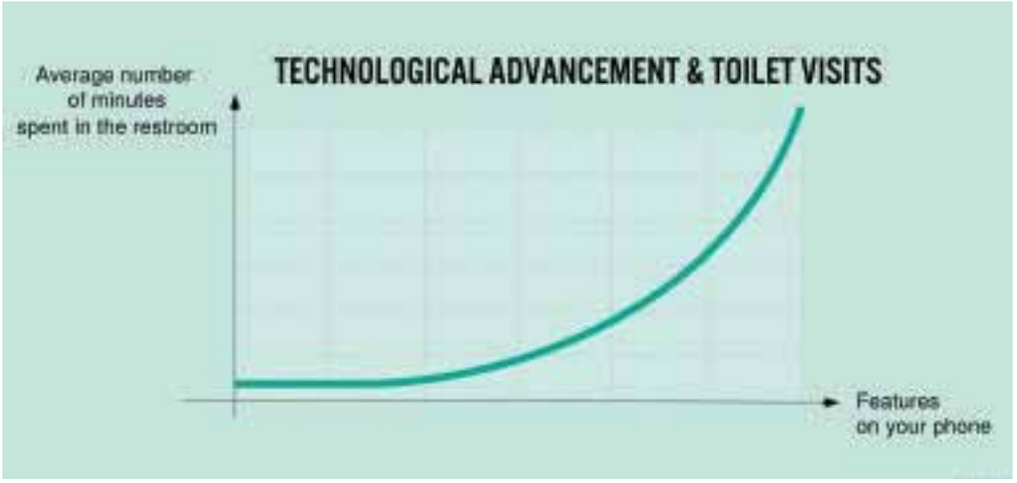

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